RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES

Ps Pengelly's Book
Given to him for learning
the Scriptures from the 1st
Morice Town Sunday
School ~

October 1829

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October 4th 1829

SOME

ACCOUNT

OF

RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES

AMONG THE

BRITISH PRISONERS IN FRANCE,

During the late War.

BEING AN EXTRACT FROM THE JOURNAL OF

J. CAVANAGH, R. N.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

An Account of Religious Societies

IN THE BRITISH NAVY.

PLYMOUTH:

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PREFACE.

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It is a lamentable but well known truth, that, from time immemorial, the generality of British Soldiers and Sailors have been remarkably irreligious; and this may be accounted for, in a great degree, by the nature of their employments, which precludes the ordinary means of moral improvement, and exposes them to the most dangerous temptations.

The honest generosity, and unparalleled bravery of British sailors, render them a very interesting body of men; and to them our whole nation is deeply indebted; for in war they have been our bulwarks, and in peace we are dependant on their perilous toil for many of the comforts of life. Yet, until lately, scarcely any attempt was made to ameliorate their moral condition. Even British benevolence, which embraces every object of charity, whether at home or abroad, seems to have regarded the moral condition of sailors as hopeless, or beyond its reach. But however thoughtless and profane they are, when ignorant of religion, we have now ample proof, that sailors are not only susceptible of religious impression themselves, but, when truly converted to God, are capable of greatly promoting the Redeemer's kingdom.

The following pages afford ample proof of this, besides what is witnessed in most of our sea ports; where, retired from the stormy element, and the din of war, offi-

cers of the Royal Navy, of various rank, are seen exemplyfying the christian religion in their own lives, and zealously promoting humane and religious institutions: whilst the "Bethel Flag," as the signal of maritime piety, now waves in almost every port, and in every climate.

It is well known, that in the course of the late war, the French privateers captured great numbers of our merchant vessels; and in some of the Spanish campaigns, many of our soldiers fell into the hands of the enemy; and as there was no regular exchange of prisoners, their case became extremely afflictive, by long confinement, and but little hope of release. In this situation, it pleased God to visit our countrymen, by the outpouring of His Spirit, and a few pious men (chiefly sailors) were made instrumental in the conversion of many of their companions; and being renewed by divine grace, and employing their time in the worship and service of God, these devout captives found solace in religion, and the time of imprisonment, became the happiest periods of their lives. When the return of peace restored these men to their country, they were dispersed in our sea ports, and became active in those religious meetings on ship-board, which have formed a new era in the history of our seafaring men.

I had an opportunity of conversing with many of the pious prisoners on their return from France, and could not but admire their devotional spirit, and acquaintance with the things of God. Some time afterwards, my friend, Mr. CAVANAGH, favoured me with the perusal of his journal, and permitted me to make the following extract; to which I have added the *substance of a Speech*, which was delivered at the fourth anniversary of the "Devonport Bethel Society," and was heard with much

interest by a large and respectable assembly. It is the unadorned testimony of JOHN PARKER, who has been a private sailor in a ship of war, and is now a respectable and useful local preacher; and it exhibits a fair specimen of those religious societies which existed in the navy during the late war.

Being desirous that the work of God among our countrymen in France, and in the navy, should be more generally known, I present the following tract to the public, trusting that it may be conducive to the edification of pious soldiers and sailors, promote the glory of God, and encourage all those who are so laudably engaged in promoting "Bethel Societies."

ALEXANDER WEIR.

Plymouth, Jan. 1st, 1826.

AN EXTRACT,

&c.

I was born at DINGLE, a sea-port town in the west of *Ireland*, December 25th, 1765. My parents were in easy circumstances, and being zealous Roman Catholics, intended to make me a Priest. I was accordingly sent to a grammar school, and made some progress in learning; but when the time had nearly arrived when I should have gone to France to complete my education for the church, my father died; and this event gave a turn to the affairs of the family, and altered my destination.

Being now at liberty to follow my own inclinations, I resolved to go to sea; and became an apprentice in the merchant service; and being free from all restraint, I soon fell into those immoral practices which are common among sailors; though not without many struggles of conscience; for from my childhood I had a consciousness of sin, and generally felt painful remorse when I had committed that which is evil.

At the commencement of the French war, in 1793, I entered the Royal Navy, and was appointed to the Queen, of 98 guns; and it was on board this ship that I obtained what I least expected, namely, a knowledge of the holy scriptures. There being a Bible served out for

each mess, it was my duty, when they were first issued, to carry one down for my messmates: but such was my Roman Catholic prejudice against that book, that I threw it down with the utmost contempt, resolving never to read it; and afterwards when I happened to sit at the table, near where it lay, I have often pushed it away from me. After some time, however, I ventured to look into it, and, to my great surprise, I found that the passage which I read, spoke of the Saviour in a manner which greatly affected my heart. My prejudice against the bible vanished; I resolved to read it through; and to accomplish this, embraced every opportunity. I felt increasingly interested, as I proceeded in reading the scriptures: and laying aside my prayers to the Virgin, and other Romish superstitions, I endeavoured to worship God according to the scriptures.

My altered conduct was soon noticed by my shipmates, and they began to ridicule and reproach me; the Roman Catholics calling me a turncoat, and others styled me a Methodist. The latter term was then quite new to me; and it was some time before I could find out its particular meaning. I at last enquired of one of the ship's company, whom I knew to be a sober man, and one who read the bible, and he informed me that Methodists were people who abstained from swearing and other vices; and spent much time in prayer and reading the scriptures. I was higly pleased with this description, and immediately resolved to be a Methodist. The pleasure which I now found in prayer, and reading the scriptures, far exceeded every former enjoyment, and enabled me patiently to bear the ridicule of my shipmates.

On the memorable first of June, our ship bearing the flag of Rear Admiral Gardner, was closely engaged in the action with the French fleet, and we suffered great

loss in killed and wounded. Being stationed on the fore-top, when the deafening noise of the battle ceased, I found myself alone, the whole of my companions, about ten in number, being either killed or wounded; and it was my first duty to convey the mangled remains of some of them to the deck. I then for a moment or two surveyed the destruction which was spread around in the two grand fleets, and was powerfully affected by a sense of divine mercy, and the providence of God in my own preservation. Under these impressions I fell down upon my knees, and endeavoured to give thanks unto my great preserver; and though my views of true religion were very imperfect, I can never forget the pleasing sensations I felt, whilst endeavouring to offer unto God the homage of a grateful heart.

Sometime after this, being on shore at Portsmouth, I attended the Methodist Chapel; and there, by means of a plain and powerful ministry, I was made acquainted with my own heart, and was led to see the gospel way of salvation. Nor could I rest, until I obtained a clear sense of God's pardoning mercy, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. I then joined the Methodist society; and for the manifold advantages I have enjoyed in this religious connexion, I trust I shall ever be thankful to God.

I was now exceedingly happy, being filled with divine peace and joy; and being desirous to glorify God by all means in my power, and feeling a great concern for the salvation of my shipmates, I began to endeavour to bring them to the saving knowledge of God; and, by the divine blessing on my feeble efforts, I succeeded in forming religious societies in the different ships wherein I was afterwards stationed, until I became a prisoner of war in France.

In April, 1810, I sailed from Portsmouth, in H. M. S. *Merope*, Captain H., for the West India station. Captain H. was a good officer; he maintained excellent discipline; and though he opposed all manner of vice, and encouraged religion, he was highly respected by the whole ship's company. We had not been long in the West Indies, when I became ill, and finding no relief from the remedies used, I was obliged to come home as an invalid. I accordingly embarked for England in a Transport, with several other naval and military officers. Nothing remarkable occurred during the voyage home, until we arrived off the Isle of Wight, when we were overtaken and captured by four French Privateers, and speedily carried into Dieppe.

The Frenchmen took every thing from us, except the clothes we had on; so that I lost all my luggage, books, and papers, except my hymn book, and the little money I carried in my pocket. On arriving at Dieppe, we were put into close confinement; but next day the officers were appointed to a seperate apartment, and allowed to go into the town, accompanied by a centinel. But one of our party having attempted to make his escape, we were deprived of those indulgences, and again closely confined with the common sailors.

Our prison was an old stable, with only a little straw for our bed; and when shut up at night, the only air we could breathe, was the corrupt and offensive effluvia of a dunghill, thrown up on the outside against the broken windows. This soon affected the health of several of my companions, and they were taken to the hospital; but when a little recovered, they were brought back and shut up with us again in this most wretched and disgusting prison. Through divine mercy, my health continued much better than I could have expected; and even here my soul was happy, and rejoiced in God my Saviour.

Of all the inconveniences which I now suffered, I lamented nothing so much as the loss of my bible; but one of my companions kindly offered to lend me one, and I gladly accepted the offer. I afterwards purchased it for 5 livres; and in the possession of this sacred treasure considered myself so rich, that no sum of money could have induced me to part with it.

In this situation, the officers were disposed to converse with me on religious subjects; and sometimes enquired how I could appear so contented in such circumstances; and I freely explained to them my christian experience, and the never-failing source of my enjoyment. In religious conversation with the officers, and instructing the poor sailors, I occupied a large portion of my time whilst we continued at Dieppe; and proved, by experience, that the presence of God is sufficient to make a man happy in a loathsome prison.

In March, 1811, the prisoners collected at Dieppe were ordered to march for Cambray. We accordingly set off, escorted by a strong guard of horse and foot. The weather was cold; and on the second day's march, it was very stormy, with snow and hail, the wind beating directly in our face. It was a long stage, and being enfeebled by confinement in such a prison, and unaccustomed to travel on foot, I was nearly exhausted by fatigue; and I sometimes thought I must lie down and perish on the road, for it appeared almost impossible for me to proceed. But in this extremity, (having ascended a rising ground) we were cheered by one of our party singing out, "a town! a town." We were re-animated by the welcome news, and exerting our little remaining strength, we soon reached the place, and by obtaining a little refreshment, were enabled to proceed on our journey. By looking to the Lord, I also renewed my spiritual strength, and was heartily

ashamed of my former despondency. Having a little money remaining, I was enabled to procure refreshments on the march, as also a bed in the different prisons where we lodged for the night; but the poor sailors had but a very scanty allowance of food, and generally very miserable places to sleep in. After a long and very fatiguing march, we arrived at Cambray, and were lodged in the Citadel. The officers had separate apartments allotted to them, according to their rank, and I was placed in a room with some captains of merchant-men, from different parts of the united kingdom.

A gentleman who was with us in the prison at Dieppe, but who had left some time before us, was the first to accost me on our arrival in the citadel. He took me by the hand, and expressed great pleasure at seeing me; observing, that what I had said to him on the subject of religion at Dieppe, had made a deep impression on his heart. I reminded him of the probability of our never seeing our country again; and urged him to seek happiness in true religion.

Being settled in my new situation, it was my first care to find out a place of worship, and ascertain whether any of my fellow-prisoners feared God. I soon learnt, that at one place, an old gentleman (hired for the purpose) read the liturgy of the church of England. There was also a Roman Catholic chapel, and the French Commandant had granted a room for the use of some pious dissenters, of the Baptist and Independant persuasion. I embraced the first opportunity to attend this meeting, and gladly joined with them in prayer and praise.

I was also informed that *John Taylor*, of Sunderland, a member of the Methodist Society, had been taken prisoner some time before my arrival in France; and being

a christian of long experience, and having zeal for God, with a knowledge of the scriptures, he began to recommend religion to his fellow-prisoners; and I believe *he* was the person who formed Methodist Societies in France: first at Arrass, and afterwards at Cambray and Besançon, and was the honoured instrument of bringing many of his country-men to the saving knowledge of God.

On Brother Taylor's removal from Cambray, the few Methodists that remained with *Mr. Avis*, their leader, associated with the dissenters in public worship, and Mr. Avis preached occasionally; but alas! even here, party-spirit made its appearance, and (on account of their doctrines,) occasioned the expulsion of the Methodists.

The Methodists, about ten in number, then assembled separately: I united with them, and, at Mr. Avis's request, took charge of the class, as his assistant. We adopted every part of the Methodist Discipline, and found it admirably calculated to promote the improvement of persons in our situation. We were united in heart, and watched over, and cordially sympathized with each other. Every morning we held a public prayer meeting, when one of us read a portion of scripture. In the afternoon Mr. Avis preached, or gave an exhortation, and the rest of our time was employed in our class meetings, and private devotions; so that we felt "no melancholy void." In these exercises, we enjoyed an happiness that overbalanced the gloom and sorrows of captivity.

Brother Avis had an excellent gift both in preaching and prayer, and was a man of exalted piety. In preaching, he constantly held forth a free, present, and full salvation, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and the word was usually accompanied with a power which greatly affected the hearers.

Our congregation increased rapidly; and daily one person or another came to us for spiritual advice, or admission into the society. We admitted persons of all religious persuasions, when they manifested an earnest desire to forsake sin, and live to God, according to the scriptures; and that we might the better judge of their sincerity, they were kept on trial for three months before they were fully admitted. In imitation of the societies at home, we also formed a *Benevolent Fund*, by small contributions; and by this we were enabled to supply the necessitous with clothing, and furnish them with the means of procuring refreshment on the road, when draughted to other prisons; and in afording such helps, we did not except those who were even our persecutors.

April 20th. How uncertain are all our enjoyments in this world! My delightful prospect, of seeing the kingdom of God enlarged, was soon obscured by a violent fever which seized me; and after a few days' illness, I was sent to the hospital, from whence I am just returned. For several days I was quite delirious, and on recovering my senses, found myself extremely exhausted, and surrounded by the sick and dying. In prospect of my own dissolution, I was led into a close examination of my state, with reference to another world, and was deeply humbled by a sense of my unfaithfulness; but casting myself on the infinite mercy of God, through the Redeemer, I was saved from the fear of death, and filled with divine consolation. My beloved Bible now lay at my pillow, but I had not strength to read it; I could only press it to my bosom, not from any superstitious feeling, but from my high estimation of its contents; for I consider divine revelation as infinitely valuable: though there was a time, when under the violent prejudice of popery, I could have burnt the bible, and all the protestants who read it. Through divine

mercy I am now recovering daily, and am thankful to the Lord for sanctified affliction.

27th. Though I am still very feeble, I can now employ myself in reading, meditation, and prayer; and I endeavour to exhort, and reprove those about me, at every opportunity. My soul is filled with love to God, and I long to be useful to my fellow-prisoners. Fifteen have been received on trial during the last month, and our congregations are still increasing in number.

May 5th. I this day ventured, for the first time, to endeavour to speak for God in public, and took for my text a portion of St. Matthew's gospel. The congregation was very attentive, and the Lord was in the midst of us, and graciously helped me. Brother Avis preached in the afternoon. He is a man of an excellent spirit, and is remarkably powerful, both in preaching and prayer.

10th. By the Lord's help I was enabled to exhort in public; and I find that I succeed in these exercises much better than I feared. Sensible of my own utter insufficiency for any attempt of this kind, and being confident that this is the cause of God, I constantly implore, and rely on, divine assistance, and feel an increasing love to God, and an increasing concern for the salvation of precious souls. I have found it good for me to be in affliction, and in prison; and I hope my being here may be of some use to my fellow-creatures. In all His dispensations, "God is love."

22nd. Our religious meetings now attract general notice, and we are ridiculed, and persecuted by many of our country-men; but having met with much opposition of this kind in several ships of war, to me, persecution is neither strange nor discouraging; but I feel very much for the poor souls who are just setting out in the ways of God.

31st. This afternoon the Lord helped me, whilst I endeavoured to expound Isaiah chap. xl, verse 31st. The texts which I use on public occasions, are impressed upon my mind whilst I am engaged in private prayer, or in reading the scriptures; I then pray for divine light on the passages, and for liberty of utterance; and the Lord grants my requests. When the appearance of a large congregation has excited fear and trembling, and when on some occasions I have lost all my ideas of a subject, after standing up before the people, I have obtained instant relief in answer to mental prayer, and have enjoyed great liberty of speech. Whilst the people in general were evidently affected by the word. I am a wonder to myself; and I thank Divine Providence for sending me here.

June 14th. Our congregations are increasingly large, and we have now sixty members in society. Ten of the most experienced and exemplary members, are now made class leaders. Our class-meetings are regular, and well attended; and the members are evidently growing in grace. The profane continue to persecute us, especially an old backslider, who lodges in the same room with me. It appears he has been a member of society in England, but has awfully fallen from grace. He is one of our principal opposers, and does all he can to annoy us. Knowing my custom of rising in the night for prayer, when the room is quiet, and my room-mates asleep, this poor creature sometimes takes pains to keep awake in order to disturb me. He always appears extremely miserable. I greatly pity him, and do not cease to pray for him.

July 5th. This afternoon I obtained leave to take a walk in the country, and had the pleasure of surveying the woks of God in this land of our captivity. The country has a beautiful appearance, and seems to be well cultivated; though the agricultural work is performed by

women, old men, and boys from seven to thirteen years of age. The conscription seems to have removed or destroyed all the rest; for it is rare to see an active young man, who is not attached to the army. Provisions are at present plentiful and cheap. The sabbath, alas! is usually spent in dancing and other diversions; and the people have none to reprove their follies, or instruct them in the knowledge of true religion. I feel much pity for them, and wish I could speak the language so as to be able to shew them the way of salvation. In the course of my walks, I met with several gentlemen who could speak good english, and appeared to be very sensible of the situation of their country. "Our churches," said they "are made stables, and our children are torn from us, and destroyed in the war, and we dare not complain;" and they contrasted their own situation with the liberties and happiness of the English: but whilst conversing with me, they often betrayed their fear of the police. I said in my heart, how happy art thou, O my country! but not thankful!

July 12th. We are increased to eighty members in society, but are still opposed by many of our countrymen, who, in addition to sneers and insults, sometimes seize the food and clothes of our people. This conduct would be severely punished, if made known to the Commandant; but we prefer suffering such wrongs patiently, and our members generally do so, praying for their persecutors. The Commandant has lately made enquiry respecting our profession, and when informed that we were Wesleyan Methodists, he expressed his approbation, and issued an order for our protection.

Sept. 1st. As the prisoners consist of seamen and soldiers from all parts of the United Kingdom, our society includes persons of all religious communions,—Roman

Catholics,— Scotch Presbyterians,— Dissenters,— and Church of England people; but we are all of one heart and of one soul, and from being depraved and irreligious, as british soldiers and seamen generally are, our members are become devout followers of Jesus Christ. Certainly this is the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes. The advantage of knowing the scriptures, appears very manifest in the natives of Scotland; but they often express their astonishment, that with a knowledge of the bible, and being accustomed to the outward forms of religion, they remained ignorant of the power of godliness, and slaves of sin, until brought to the saving knowledge of God in a French prison. The Roman Catholics are remarkably devout, and frequently exclaim against their former delusions. They can scarcely have common charity for their priests, who led them on in gross and destructive error: and it is delightful to hear our members, of all descriptions, testify of the grace of God in our love-feasts. Most of them profess to have clear experience of justification by faith, and are seeking entire sanctification; and amidst the scoffs and insults of the wicked, and all the inconveniences of our situation, their conduct coresponds with their profession; whilst others appear truly penitent; and all with tears of contrition and of joy, praise God for bringing them to this place.

Sept. 9th. Our worthy brother Avis is now so unwell, that I fear we shall lose him; but sensible of my own inability, I pray the Lord to spare him for the sake of those precious souls among whom the Lord has greatly blessed his labours. The allowance which the French Government makes for our subsistance, is very miserable, being half-a-pound of the poorest beef, with a small quantity of coarse bread and peas, per day, for each man; so that if it were not for the assistance obtained from home,

thousands of poor fellows must suffer greatly from want of food, during a long imprisonment. But a small weekly allowance from the subscriptions at Lloyd's, enables them to procure some additional food, and other necessaries. May the Lord reward our kind benefactors!

16th. Brother Avis being ill, the speaking in public now devolves entirely upon me; and in this work I am often exercised by distressing temptations and fears; and I painfully feel that the "*fear of man bringeth a snare;*" especially when I observe persons in the congregation who are better informed than myself: but by lifting up my heart in prayer, I generally obtain relief from embarrassment, and when I have read my text, have great freedom of speech, whilst the word is evidently accompanied with power to the hearts of the hearers. The society still prospers, and I hope the Lord will provide food for this needy flock.

I have now full liberty to visit the hospital whenever I think proper. I consider this privilege, as an answer to prayer, and am thankful for it, as it affords me an opportunity of visiting poor Avis; and I find that the softening influence of affliction in a strange land, disposes many to hear the truth, who in health are profane and careless.

29th. Spoke again in public with mixed feelings of sorrow and joy;—sorrow for our brother who is likely to be taken from us, but thankfulness and joy on account of the goodness of God towards me an unworthy creature. This afternoon I was informed of the arrival of a *Black*, as a prisoner of war, who proved to be an American Methodist, and had a talent for public speaking; so we gave him the right hand of fellowship; and invited him to preach for us.

The circumstance of a black man preaching, attracted an unusual number of hearers; and poor Avis being laid aside by illness, I am thankful to God for this unexpected helper. On visiting brother Avis, I found him extremely ill, but filled with divine peace and joy, as happy witness of that full salvation and its blessedness which he was accustomed to preach to us. He exhorted me to take courage, and persevere in the work of the Lord, whatever trials or discouragements I might meet with;—may the Lord enable me to follow his advice, and excellent example.

30th. This afternoon brother Jay preached again, and the word was attended with much power, many of the hearers were greatly affected; some convinced of their sin and danger; and others rejoicing in the Lord.

Oct. 8th. To-day I received the sad news of brother Avis's death; and though I have for some time expected this event, I was overwhelmed with sorrow, when I considered his great usefulness in the cause of God, and my own insufficiency, on whom the chief care of the society must now devolve. I retired for prayer, and whilst employed in this exercise, was greatly encouraged by the powerful application of that promise, "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee." I then went to the Commandant, and obtained leave for thirty-two of our society to attend the funeral. From the hospital we passed in solemn procession through great part of the town to the burying ground, singing a funeral hymn; and when arrived at the grave, I read the burial service; we then sung another hymn, and I concluded with prayer.

Our sorrow on this occasion was very great—Our brother Avis was a most exemplary christian, and had been exceedingly useful as our spiritual guide, and many regarded him as their spiritual father.

Many of the town's-people attended, to witness this mournful scene, and mingled their tears with ours. They are certainly a very feeling people.

12th. I endeavoured to speak from 1st Corinthians, chap. xiii, verse 13th, and was greatly assisted. I afterwards met two of the classes, and we had a very profitable season, the members being all in pursuit of christian holiness, and resolved to endure all persecutions patiently.

13th. This afternoon brother Jay preached our late brother Avis's funeral sermon; I could not attempt it, for it would have been too much for my feelings. The room was crowded with attentive hearers; many stood at the outside, and many of the wicked were powerfully impressed, and cried aloud for mercy:—I admitted several into the society. Thanks be to God, the kingdom of satan is daily losing its subjects, and our society is still increasing.

20th. This morning the sacred fire was enkindled at our prayer meeting, and spread through the society: many of the hearers were also greatly affected: our Saviour was truly present with us, according to his gracious promise. In the afternoon one came and informed me, that himself and two more had spent the whole night in prayer, until they obtained God's pardoning love, to the great joy of their souls; and indeed the whole society seem to be earnestly following after holiness. They often weep at the remembrance of their former manner of life, and praise the Lord for sending them here, in the course of his providence.

25th. Having got our meeting-room repaired and and white-washed, we assembled again for public worship, and it was a very profitable time. In visiting the sick in the hospital, and attending our various meetings, I find full employment for my time, whilst all our members are

employed throughout the day in reading, meditation, and prayer, and in exhorting their old companions. What a wonderful change divine grace has effected in these men; and how delightful it is to me, to see them thus employed and happy in God!

29th. This morning whilst speaking in public, I was so overwhelmed with a sense of divine love, that I could not proceed, and all present were greatly affected; it was a time to be remembered. I afterwards met the society, and admitted several on trial. There has been a great mortality among the prisoners in this Depôt, but we are now more healthy, and the usual number of deaths is greatly diminished. This is to be ascribed, under God, to the supplies we now obtain from home, especially the subscription at Lloyd's. I think there could not be a more useful charity; and many prayers are offered to God for our generous benefactors.

Nov. 3rd. I have been much tempted of late, to desist from my public labours, and on this account have had many inward conflicts; but experience has taught me, that "After a storm there cometh a calm." The Lord was in the midst of us to-day, and we enjoyed an abundant out-pouring of the Spirit. Some of the congregation were smiting upon their breasts, and crying for mercy, whilst many others were rejoicing in the Lord:—this gracious season will be long remembered.

11th. This morning I did not enjoy my usual liberty in exhorting, and in the afternoon I felt uncommon barrenness; but was afterwards surprised to find that the people were profited:—this gave me fresh encouragement.

18th. *Mr. Robertson*, of the dissenting meeting, was with us to-day, and gave us a very useful sermon. He appeared to be much in the spirit of christian love. His colleague, *Mr. T.*, seems to regard us as a sort of Heritics,

and will not associate with us; but we can make allowance for his prejudice, and believe he is a good christian. He posseses considerable talents, and his public labours are made useful at their meetings. We strive to maintain the "Unity of the Spirit" with our dissenting brethren; for the wicked are always watching to observe any inconsistency in us professors. We still increase in number, and the experience of our members is increasingly deep, and solid. Persecution still continues, and two of our members, who were very promising, are gone back, but I hope to recover them.

23rd. A circumstance has occurred which grieves me exceedingly: an effort has been made to divide our society, and thirty members have been persuaded to leave us. Ten of these soon repented of their conduct, and returned to us; ten joined the Dissenters; but alas! the other ten, becoming unsettled, have returned to their former sinful courses, and are even become persecutors. I greatly deplore the party-spirit, and unholy zeal, which have produced such consequences; may the Lord forgive the parties concerned in this unchristian work.

25th. In my visits at the hospital, I go from room to room, and pray and converse with all who will hear me; and I have much encouragement in this laborious exercise. As I was speaking to one of the sick to-day, a black man in another bed called to me, and on approaching his bed, I perceived he was extremely ill. On enquiring how he was, he replied with great earnestness, "I am a dead man, and have been a vile sinner all my life, and God will not have mercy upon me." I said, "how do you know that he will not?" he replied, eagerly, "something within tells me so." I answered, "tell that something, that Jesus Christ died for poor black men, and all the sin-

ners in the world." At this saying, tears gushed from his eyes, and with all his strength he cried unto God for mercy, and then said in a tone of greatest astonishment and earnestness, "and is there mercy for me? for me, a poor black man?" I said, "surely there *is*, or you could not thus lament your sins and cry to God as you do: It is God's mercy that disposes you to do so, and the Lord will save you." That instant he was enabled to trust in divine mercy through Jesus Christ, and hope appeared in his emaciated countenance. As I was about to leave him, he said again, "I am a dead man—I have eight years' wages due to me, and I have no relations—I wish to leave you my wages, by making a Will." But it was a rule with me to decline all such offers, lest any should suspect me of base motives in visiting the hospital; so I positively refused, though the poor black pressed me to accept his offer. As I was leaving his bedside, another poor fellow called to me, and as I approached him, he wept aloud, and cried, "I am undone—undone for ever and ever—I am a lost soul!" I waited until his agony of grief had somewhat subsided, and then enquired, why he had such views of himself. He replied, "O Sir! I heard all you said to the black man, and particularly that Jesus Christ died for sinners." I said, "do you believe this?" "Yes Sir," said he, "but I am worse than the black man." I asked him why he thought so, and, with streaming eyes, he proceeded to say, "I was born in Scotland, and being brought up in that church, I was taught to believe that if predestinated to salvation nothing could harm me; but if I was not elected, I could not be saved. My parents took great pains to instruct me in my youth, and set before me a good example; but before I arrived at manhood my father died, and I was left without restraint; for being an only child, my tender mother was too indulgent, and I soon gave myself up to all manner of vice." Here he

deeply sighed, and his tears flowed afresh. Recovering a little, he added, "My mother perceiving, at last, that her little property was nearly exhausted by my extravagance, expostalated with me, saying, My dear son, if you go on thus, we shall be thrown out of house and home, and quite ruined—but I am unable to relate the whole. My mother married again, and I enlisted for a marine."

"You know, Sir, a marine's manner of life in a ship of war:—mine was a life of sin and misery, and in consequence of my wickedness, I am now here on this bed of death."—After a little pause, I said to him, Do you know that passage of scripture which saith, 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure?' "Oh Sir!" said he, "I do; and since I heard you speak to the black man, I believe it."—I said, you must come to God, just as you are, as the Prodigal and Publican in the gospel, and Jesus Christ will save you, even at the eleventh hour. Put away every thing but 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' On going into the hospital the next day, one of his room-mates informed me that the poor marine had been weeping and praying ever since I left him yesterday; and on going to him, I found him happy in the Lord. As soon as he saw me, he exclaimed, as loud as he was able, "Oh, Sir! I have found the Lord Jesus Christ! all my pain is gone,—I long to depart,—for I know Jesus died for me." He also expressed a wish to make his Will in my favour, but I refused, for the same reason as before. He died the same night triumphing in hope of glory; and the poor black man left a glorious testimony also.

These death-bed scenes made a great impression on the patients generally, and they afterwards received my visits with thankfulness.

27th. On returning from the prayer meeting this morning, an old man came to me, requesting to be admitted into our society. On enquiry, I found he was a Scotchman, sixty-three years of age. I asked him if he had lived without Christ all this time; and he replied, that he knew nothing of God or a Saviour, until he attended our meeting a few days since. I said, "have you not read the bible?" He answered, "Yes, I was a christian outwardly, but I now see that my heart is full of sin and wickedness; and what to do I know not:—sixty-three years of age, and hell before me!" He wept, and cried aloud, "What shall I do to be saved?" Many of the wicked collected around us, and heard our conversation, which I could not regret, for I had great liberty of speech, and gladly consented to admit the old man into our society.

29th. We have now one hundred and thirty members in society, and twelve class-leaders, including brother Jay and myself. Sinners are frequently convinced at our public meetings, and our members are evidently growing in grace. Our love-feasts are both lively and solemn; though some of the members are rather noisy on these occasions. I do not encourage noise, but rather recommend speaking clearly and simply of our experience; but we cannot always prevent the loud expression of the strong emotions of our souls. The poor old Scotchman exclaimed aloud in the love-feast to day, "I am out of hell!—I am on praying ground!" We sympathised with him, and offered heartfelt praise to God.

After the usual trial of three months, we have admitted into the society, a Mr. H., captain of a merchantman, who bids fair to be a very useful member. It appears his parents have been members of the society in England for many years, and trained up their son in a regular attend-

ance on religious ordinances: but as he grew up, and was placed beyond the reach of parental authority, he gave way to his passions, and indulged in the wickedness which is common among seafaring men, until he became a prisoner in this Citadel. His convictions and distress of soul were at first very deep, and his conversion very remarkable. He states that for several years the thoughts of death and eternity greatly troubled him; but he did not yield to conviction until he heard our preaching. "I was cut to the heart," said he, "and retired to give vent to my grief, for I was ashamed to do it in such a congregation." We admitted him on trial as a sincere penitent, and counselled and encouraged him. He renounced at once his former sinful courses, and companions; and soon obtained peace and joy through believing in the Lord Jesus; and is now valiant in the cause of God. He is humble, and benevolent; and as he receives large supplies from home, he does much good in helping the poor brethren, or any person who appears to be in need. Is not this a brand plucked from the fire, and probably a blessed fruit of the prayers of his pious parents? Some of our society now profess to enjoy entire sanctification; their natural passions and propensities being all subdued and governed by the grace of God; and from a very particular notice of their deportment, there is no reason to doubt their testimony:—they appear indeed to be "*New creatures in Christ Jesus.*" Others believe this full salvation to be attainable, and are pressing towards it; whilst a few are still in doubt and fear, and appear determined not to rest short of clear experience.

Dec. 1st. This day, *brother Cook*, one of our class leaders, began to speak in public. He is a Soldier of the army of Spain, and had the advantage of being brought up among the Methodists in England; and has been for some

time, a faithful and useful class-leader. He delivered a very solemn discourse, which was well received by the people. Surely "God is Love," and saw my affliction when our good brother Avis was taken from us, and has raised up some valdable helpers.

7th. Having obtained a Tune Book from Valenceines, thirty of our members are become proficients in singing, and make our prison resound with the praises of God. There are now four of us who preach in regular rotation. I meet all the class-leaders once a week; and between visiting the sick, and attending our various meetings, I am occupied from three or four in the morning, until nine at night; and all our members are fully employed in the service of the Lord. We maintain a regular correspondence with our brethren in other parts of France, and now there are Methodist societies, with preachers and class-leaders in almost every Depôt of prisoners; and we have the satisfaction to know, that the work of the Lord prospers in every place. At *Givit*, the Rev. Mr. Wolf, of the Church of England, has laboured very faithfully, and with considerable success among the prisoners; and in our society there, brother J. Mills preaches with great acceptance, and others are coming forward to assist him. At *Sarre Libre*, we have an increasing society, composed chiefly of Soldiers taken in Spain. At *Arrass*, *Valenceines*, and *Longwy*, we also have societies. At Besançon, we have about four hundred and fifty members, and there our excellent bother J. Taylor, and others, labour with great success. Cambray being a receiving Depôt, our members are subject to great variations, from the circumstance of frequent draughts to other Depôts. This was painful to us at first, but we are now sensible of the advantage of our people carrying the light of truth with them, wherever they go; and thus it becomes the more widely diffused.

31st. Another of our class-leaders has begun to speak in public, and is likely to be very useful as a preacher. I am frequently exercised by most painful inward conflicts; but, by instantly looking unto God, I obtain relief: and after these storms of temptation, I generally enjoy a sweet calm—yea, an heaven below:—praise God, O my soul!

For some time past, our thoughtless companions had been preparing to keep christmas; and having obtained liberty of the Commandant for three days, the citadel was such a scene of drunkenness, swearing, and quarrelling, as I scarcely ever witnessed before, and four of my flock were carried away by this torrent of iniquity. This was a great grief to me; but I went in search of them; and, after some time, found them in great trouble of mind. I prayed with them, and hope they are now restored penitents, and will be more on their guard in future; whilst their fall seems to be regarded by the whole society as a warning to watch and pray, lest they enter into temptation.

Jan. 1st, 1812. This morning I gave an exhortation in public, and the Lord was with us. In the afternoon, we held our love-feast, when the testimony of all was pleasing; but that of a black man especially, excited tears of joy from all present. We are at this time one hundred and fifty members, besides a considerable number on trial. We are of different ages, from sixteen to sixty-three,—from different parts of the world, and of different colours, having among us several African blacks. We were formerly of diffrent creeds; but, for the most part, ignorant of religion, and profane; but by the grace of God we are now of one heart and soul, following after christian holiness; and in this pursuit, our prison is to us a paradise! Surely this is the Lord's doing, and truly wonderful.

I have sometimes secretly wished, that some of our regular ministers from England might come to us, at least one for each Depôt, even if they were taken prisoners: but we have here ample proof, that the Lord can make Sailors, Soldiers, or Fishermen, His instruments to convert sinners from the error of their ways. To God be all the glory!

Feb. 3rd. Having at the request of the Free Masons, buried one of their society, I yesterday preached a funeral sermon. Our congregation was very large, and heard with great attention. Some of the free masons were formerly among our persecutors, but they are now our friends, and some of that fraternity have joined our society.

15th. As I was walking alone to-day, Mr. T., of the other meeting, came to me, and said, rather abruptly, "Are you perfect?" I replied, "if I were so, I would not tell you; but this I can tell you, that I am unspeakably happy; and that I love you, and all mankind." But said he, "do you expect to be cleansed from all your sins in this life?" I answered, "it is written 'The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.'" "I know that," said he, "at, or a little before death." I said, "do you not give death the glory of our salvation rather than the blood of Christ?" He then fell into a violent passion, and left me.

March 1st. When we are locked up in our rooms at night, I usually give an exhortation to my room-mates, who are captains and mates of merchantmen, and some of them extremely wicked; but the Lord has already given me two captains and four mates as the fruit of my labour, and hitherto they have proved faithful. Another dear man, an English pilot, who was much given to drink, professes also to have felt the word of reproof and exhortation, and appears resolved to forsake his sinful habits. I am thus encouraged to persevere with my room-mates.

May 1st. The weather being now fine, I resolved to preach in the open air; I accordingly stopped the society and informed them of my intention; adding, that if they feared the opposition I might meet with out of doors, they had better meet in the room, and brother Cook would preach to them. At the time appointed, I went, and stood on the steps of the storehouse; but as I was about to begin, fear and trembling seized me to such a degree, that I could scarcely open my hymn book. I ventured, however, to give out the hymn which begins with, "Come ye that love the Lord," &c., my fear immediately vanished, and my soul was filled with the love of God. I had only sung a few lines, when our whole society joined me. Their voices filled the citadel; and in a few minutes we had more than a thousand persons collected around us. I had great liberty in speaking, and all appeared to hear with attention until we concluded; we then received a little abuse from the wicked, but having made a beginning, we are resolved to continue preaching abroad, as we find many will come to hear in the open air, who are either afraid or ashamed to attend in our preaching room.

15th. Whilst preaching in the open air to-day, I observed many of the congregation in tears; and we find that twelve persons at least, have been awakened since we began out of doors; and these have joined the society. Many of the French inhabitants attend these meetings, and by their reverent behaviour, form a striking contrast with many of our own countrymen. But thanks be unto God, some of the most wicked in the citadel are frequently convinced and converted unto God; and thus the kingdom of satan falls, whilst our society increases.

31st. We have in this citadel two Scotchmen who make a great noise, one declaring himself to be Jesus Christ, and the other professes to be so filled with the

Holy Ghost, that no man is fit to converse with him. Whether they are *mad*, or *enthusiasts*, I cannot say, but I think they are certainly possessed of the devil; for amidst their repeating scripture passages, and talking of predestination, they swear and blaspheme most tremendously.

June 15th. Joined a few more to the society; glory be to God, He is still carrying on His work among us. A French Stationer lately informed me that he could procure Wesley's hymn book for us. We rejoiced at this intelligence, and gave him an order for four dozen, at four franks, or three and fourpence a copy. When the parcel arrived, we shed tears of joy; and kneeling down, gave thanks to God for such a treasure in the land of our captivity. Having at first but one or two hymn books among us, several of our members have taken the pains to copy the whole volume in imitation of print, and have furnished some beautiful specimens of penmanship; but as we now procure printed copies, the time will be saved for other purposes.

20th. As I stood up this evening to preach out of doors, I was seized with fear and trembling; and found it necessary to hold my hymn book with both hands, or it must have fallen. I had just power to say inwardly, Lord help me!—and I was immediately filled with light, and love; and had uncommon freedom of utterance. Surely this is the Lord's doing, or I know not how these facts can be accounted for.

30th. It appears that ten persons were deeply convinced under the discourse from Job, chap. i, verse 21st: we have admitted them on trial, and they appear to be truly penitent. Fifty persons have already been brought to the saving knowledge of God, by the preaching in the open air; and we hope to gain many more before winter.

My fellow-labourers are acquiring more courage, and have agreed to preach, in their turn, out of doors.

Aug. 15th. Another of our little flock is removed by death; and has left a glorious testimony. The hospital nurses, who are nuns, (and attend the sick from religious motives,) took great notice of our brother's peace and joy during his last illness, and were constrained to say, "These are the people of God." And even the Catholic Priest who attends the hospital, speaks favourably of the Wesleyans. We sang, as usual, from the hospital to the burying ground; and were attended by a great number of the French people, who appear to feel an increasing interest in our religious services.

31st. The enemies of religion have lately abused us exceedingly: four violent fellows were particularly active in this opposition; and grossly assaulted one of our members to-day, as we were coming from our meeting. I stood still amidst the bustle, but none of them touched me. A few days after this outrage, the chief persecutor came to hear me out of doors, whilst I was endeavouring to preach from Romans, chap. xii, verse 21st, "*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*" The poor fellow was cut to the heart, and falling flat upon the ground, cried aloud in great distress, "What shall I do to be saved." I went to prayer with him, and hope he is truly penitent. Our thoughtless opposers know well, that by complaining to the Commandant, I could get them severely punished for their riotous abuse; but they say it was never known that a Methodist got any person punished: and from our patience, they take encouragemen to insult us. However, through divine mercy, some of the worst are now converted to God, and we have hope concerning the rest.

Sep. 15th. Another draught is about to leave this citadel, and a number of our members are included in it. By removals of this kind, I am now left with seventy-nine in society, and a few on trial. But by the dispersion of our members, I trust the light of truth will be increasingly diffused. We hear from the other Depôts, that the work of the Lord still prospers, though opposition and persecution are common in every place. Being a native of Ireland, my poor countrymen often attack me, calling me a turncoat, &c., for leaving the Catholic Church; but some of *these* also have been brought in; and Irishmen, when converted, are exceedingly zealous in the cause of God, and labour to bring their countrymen to repentance, and have succeeded in various pleasing instances.

Oct. 1st. One of our members after hearing my exhortation to watchfulness, told me, in great simplicity, that he was so filled with love, that he was confident he never could fall. I cautioned him to beware of self-confidence; but he soon gave proof of human weakness, by being guilty of improper conduct. From this I took occasion to warn others, and gave him such advice as I judged needful for his restoration.

16th. A young man who had awfully fallen from grace, so as to become a persecutor, and several others whom we had lost, have lately returned to us. The brethren received them with joy; and those persons greatly lament their backslidings.

Nov. 1st. Through divine grace, I am now greatly delivered from the painful fear which I have so often felt in my public labours; and I have now less anxiety respecting the constancy of our members. Thank the Lord, they are evidently advancing in knowledge and christian experience; and though we are abused by the wicked, and zealously opposed by some protestant professors of

religion, who regard us as a kind of heretics, our members shew, by holiness of life, and happiness in affliction and death, that their faith is genuine.

30th. I have received an invitation to lodge in another room; this I consider a providential opening, as I hope to be in the way of greater usefulness. But another trial has just happened to us;—after expending one hundred franks in repairing our meeting-room, we were obliged to leave it. Another is offered, but it is far too small for us, so that when the weather does not permit our preaching abroad, we crowd as many as possible into our little place, and great numbers stand without, amidst rain or snow, during the service. These are trying circumstances; but we are refreshed in the ordinances of God; and as our difficulties abound, the more are we filled with peace, and joy, and love.

Dec. 3rd. I continue my visits to the hospital, and many of the afflicted are seeking the Lord. Our hospital is kept very clean: the nurses are attentive, and the surgeons attend twice a day. There is also a Priest who says mass twice on the sundays, and several times in the week. In witnessing these vain forms, as I pass along, I am reminded of the goodness of God, in saving me from the superstition of the Romish Church, and giving me to enjoy the vital power of godliness. But I am often astonished at observing the very different manners of our countrymen and the French people, with regard to religion. Though the latter have no bibles, and are under the influence of popish superstition, they shew great reverence for sacred things, when we converse with them, and when they attend our meetings: whilst the major part of our countrymen only attend to ridicule and disturb us.

Jan. 1st, 1813. This being the first day of the new year, we held a love-feast as usual; and every one present

spoke his experience:—it was a refreshing season. I joined six more to the society, and they appear to be in good earnest. One in particular blesses the day that he was taken prisoner, for this captivity has led to the salvation of his soul:—and, indeed, such is our religious enjoyment, that we are all thankful to God for bringing us here. I have just received some pleasing intelligence from our brethren in the other Depôts; and in every place the good work prospers. I read the letter to the society, and all, with one voice, gave praise to God; and with one accord poured out our hearts in prayer for our fellow-prisoners, our king and country, and particularly for the subscribers at Lloyds, without whose aid, our situation, as to outward things, would be dismal:—we thank God who has put it into the hearts of our countrymen at home, to help us poor captives.

3rd. In preaching to-day, I enjoyed great liberty; but was afterwards painfully exercised with temptations. This is often the case with me; but of all my exercises of this kind, a temptation to vain glory—to think that I am of some importance in the work of God—grieves me most, and I am often harrassed with it; but I am too conscious of my ignorance and weakness, to *indulge* such notions; and by looking unto God, I obtain deliverance; and I find that my various inward conflicts, enable me to sympathise with others, whilst they keep me at the foot of the cross. Brother Jay, being an American, is ordered to join a privateer at St. Maloes, and is thus obliged to leave us:—we parted in tears. To-day I joined ten more to the society.

31st. Having to preach this afternoon, I employed the fore part of the day in endeavouring to find a suitable text, but could not fix on any one in the whole bible. The time of meeting drawing nigh, I was greatly perplexed, and knew not what to do. I prayed again, and again,

but all was darkness. I could not think of disappointing the congregation, and was afraid to meet the people. When the time arrived, I went trembling, and praying to God for help; but I had no sooner began to give out the hymn, than light shone into my mind: my heart was filled with divine love; and I was enabled to speak with extraordinary liberty. The congregation generally, was in tears; and it appears that at least five persons were convinced of sin, and turned to God, on this occasion. How astonishing, that the Lord should employ such a poor creature to declare His truth to these people! I thankfully adore the hand that conducted me to this place.

Feb. 16th. In preaching to-day, I was filled with matter, and had great freedom of utterance:—this is like sailing with a fair wind. The brethren Jackson and Cook, are active and acceptable preachers, and the work still prospers in our hands. Praise God, O my soul!

28th. Another of our dear brethren has just exchanged worlds; he also died triumphantly, and we buried him in our usual manner. Brother Jackson preached the funeral sermon in the afternoon. Many of the inhabitants attended, and manifested great seriousness during the whole service. The Commandant, and French people generally, are very kind and attentive to us. They at first distinguished us by the name Believers, but now they style us Methodists, or Wesleyans; and by attending our meetings, and conversing with us, they acquire at least some knowledge of Methodism.

March 2nd. We have again one hundred and thirty members in society, and they evidently increase in knowledge, and in the love of God; and the work in other parts of France, still spreads and grows.

March 15th. Added eight more to the society. Including those who have been draughted to other prisons,

we are now about four hundred members. Blessed be God! There is now much talk of peace; and at this news the whole citadel is in an uproar. But our society remains unmoved by these things, each member being disposed to say, with calm resignation, the will of the Lord be done.

31st. To-day I wrote to Paris for more hymn books: we are in great want of books, especially bibles. Having among us a copy of *Baxter's Saint's Rest*, *Hervey's Meditations*, *the Life of Mrs. Rogers*, and a few *Magazines*, we make the most of them by lending, and even sending them to the brethren in the other prisons. In this respect, we have "All things common," but we greatly desire an increase of our little library.

Our situation as to food, is now much improved, potatoes being plentiful and cheap: and on these, with the addition of a little salt, and a draught of good water, we are now enabled to feast in the citadel; and a person may live tolerably well in the town at about eightpence per day. The prisoners appear clean on the Lord's day, and by far the greater part attend some place of worship; but there are still some who will not be persuaded to pay any attention to religion:—we pity, and pray for them. Though the weather is still unfavourable, I began to-day to preach again in the open air, and two of the most profane persons in the citadel, whilst hearing the word, cried out aloud, "God be merciful to us sinners;" and I trust they will continue to seek the Lord.

April 15th. We this day held our love-feast, and all were cheered and comforted; except a few who cannot rest until "Christ is formed in them the hope of glory." We now enjoy unusual peace, for most of those who were our chief persecutors are converted to God. Our prayer meetings are exceedingly well attended, and our singing

attracts many who are fond of music; and several who attended at first from no better motive, have been converted, and are now steady members of society.

It is often very affecting to see men, who have been stout-hearted soldiers and sailors, weeping at the remembrance of their past sins, and teachable as children; and many of them when first convinced, pray and weep day and night, until they obtain peace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

30th. This morning, after muster, I received notice to quit our preaching-room, as a large number of prisoners lately taken, are expected in this citadel. I informed the society of this painful news, and exhorted them to trust in the Lord, and cleave to each other; and we gave ourselves to prayer. This is the second time, that after we had been at considerable expence and labour, in fitting up a room, we have been obliged to leave it. But we trust the Lord will provide; in the mean time, we must hold all our meetings out of doors.

Brother Cook preached in the open air, and had great liberty, and a very attentive congregation. I preached in the afternoon; the weather was unsettled, and we had a few drops of rain, but the congregation kept their place until we had finished; soon after it rained excessively. A French Priest who was present, observed, "I do believe these Wesleyans are the people of God, for whilst at their devotions, even the clouds favour them."

May 15th. To-day one of the schoolmasters kindly offered me the use of his school-room, during the time it is not occupied by the school. I thankfully accepted the offer; but found, on trial, that it was too small to allow the members to sit down; but we stood together as close as we could, and thanked God for such an accommoda-

tion. This schoolmaster was at one time a violent opposer, but thanks be to God who causes our enemies to become friends.

31st. Brother Jackson preached in the open air, and delivered an excellent discourse: we were all edefied, and many of the hearers were pricked to the heart. Our citadel is now so full, that there is no probability of our obtaining a larger room; and hence, after a little consultation, we resolved to build a small chapel. I accordingly began a subscription; and, considering our circumstances, perhaps there never was a greater display of christian liberality, than on this occasion:—three hundred livres, value tenpence sterling, were subscribed at once. Some of the poor members abstained from the common necessaries of life, for days together, that they might be able to contribute out of their scanty allowance: others, half naked, having neither shirts nor shoes, came forward with their two sous each. At such an expression of zeal I was greatly affected, and suggested that such persons had better keep their money to procure some necessary clothing; but with tears they entreated me to allow them to contribute their mite. I received their money, but next day we made a collection in the society, and procured necessary clothing for them. Our members who obtain supplies from home, also gave liberally, according to their ability. I applied to the Commandant, and he readily granted a convenient spot of ground, where we have the advantage of a brick wall on one side; and I agreed with a carpenter to construct the other parts of wood. On the 28th instant, the work was begun. We assembled on the occasion, sung an hymn, and prayed; and I expounded a part of the fourth chapter of Nehemiah. Our congregation was large, and included many of the inhabitants; and all were very attentive. Our

enemies seem astonished at our proceeding, and cannot imagine how we can accomplish such a building. Our members cheerfully assist the workmen, and we obtain aid from most unexpected quarters. One who has been a great plague to me by his opposition, gave me seven livres; and another person who was once inveterate against us, gave me three livres.

June 15th. Our little chapel being finished, we this day opened it for public worship, and I spoke on the occasion, from Nehemiah, chap. vi, verse 16th. About the middle of my discourse there appeared a great sensation among the people, and our enemies openly declared it was the Lord's doing; and from that time they ceased to disturb us. Some French gentlemen, with the Commandant, were present. He afterwards sent for me, and enquired how we prisoners could find means to erect such a place. I explained to him the nature of our religious union, our number in society, and the amount of our subscriptions. He expressed his approbation, and wished us success: indeed this officer has, from the beginning, shewn us much kindness.

30th. To-day I paid the last bill for the erection of our little chapel, and find it has cost us upwards of five hundred franks; and though it is an humble place, it is certainly a monument of holy zeal. Brother Jackson preached; and we all enjoyed a refreshing season.

July 15th. I have just obtained a very seasonable relief by a remittance from my friend at Portsmouth. Oh! the goodness of God! who so richly provides for both soul and body:—I desire to be thankful for all his mercies.

Aug. 15th. Our congregation is so increased, that our new chapel is already too small for us. We also hear strange reports respecting the success of the Russian

army; and we perceive that the town's-people are in great dread of the Cossacks. But we dare not be inquisitive as to these matters; and the people are very reserved in communicating to us, from fear of the police. But we suspect there must be something extraordinary the matter, for we are now more closely confined, and the town is in an uproar. But such news or events do not much affect me; and I would rather witness, or hear of the conquests of my redeemer. Captain H., of the merchant service, having for some time studied the scriptures, with much prayer, and having clear experience, is now become one of our public speakers, and is both courageous and faithful.

Oct. 1st. We began our love-feast at one o'clock, and continued until four. The Lord's presence was with us, and we enjoyed a refreshing season. Many of the penitents are set at liberty at our love-feasts.

Another of our flock has escaped to glory! He had been a member for more than two years, during which time, he walked very circumspectly, and had clear experience of converting and sanctifying grace. From the beginning of his illness, he had a firm confidence in God, and a delightful hope of heaven.

I preached a funeral sermon, to a large and much-affected congregation; and next day two persons, who had been bitter opposers, came to me for advice, being resolved to seek salvation.

Dec. 1st. We find that the Besançon Depôt is broken up, in consequence of the advance of the allied armies, and our flourishing society there is now scattered. Some of them are arrived here, fatigued by long marches, and in want of every thing. We made a collection and procured them some necessaries.

26th. I preached a funeral sermon for another of our brethren; he was a very pious character, and left a glorious testimony:—it was a profitable time. Since our brethren the dissenters, have held separate meetings, they have lived in peace with each other, and they do not interfere with us; so we enjoy the sweet harmony of christian love, and this is both good and pleasant.

Jan. 1st, 1814. We began the new year as usual, with praise and prayer, in our several apartments, as we could not assemble in the chapel at an early hour. We afterwards held our love-feast, and it was a very refreshing season.

22nd. The prisoners of war in this part of France are now marching daily to the south and west, in consequence of the advance of the Russians; and to-day, the first party leaves this citadel, including a part of our society; so we assembled for the last time, in our little chapel, and gave ourselves to prayer. I exhorted the brethren to cleave to each other on the march, and at every place of halting raise an alter for God. We wept and prayed, commending each other to God, until we were obliged to tear ourselves from each other, and from a place in which we had enjoyed such spiritual delights, and witnessed astonishing displays of the power and goodness of God.

26th. As the second draught is ordered to march to-day, I sold our chapel for one hundred livres, which I divided among the poor members, to enable them to procure necessaries on the march:—we parted with prayer and floods of tears.

28th. To-day I bid adieu to Cambray, and marched for Tower-a-Towers, where we arrived safe in the evening. Having given my poor brethren all the money I had, I now found myself pennyless, fatigued, and hungry, and had no means to procure refreshment. I offered my

watch for sale, but could find no purchaser, and knew not what to do; but having retired to a bye-place for prayer, I was refreshed in spirit, and felt confidence in God, and entire resignation to His will. As I arose from my knees, intending to walk in retirement, I met one of the society, who said he was looking for me, for Mr. H., who was gone forward, had given him five francs for me. This was a most seasonable supply, and my heart overflowed with gratitude.

Next day we arrived at Poictiers, and were lodged in a most filthy barrack, and the prisoners so crowded together, that they had scarce room to lie down. But by the good providence of God I obtained a place in an apartment with some captains, where we were more comfortable than many others of our countrymen.

31st. Having collected the few members that are here, we held a meeting for worship in the open air; some of the profane began, as usual, to ridicule and oppose us; but here also, the Commandant afforded us his countenance and protection, and allowed me to go into the town, and visit the hospital whenever I pleased. During our stay here, I also received an acceptable proof of christian love from one of our Calvanist brethren. Suspecting that I was in want, (which was really the case) he kindly sent me five livres. I soon after received a supply from home, by way of Paris, and was thus enabled to repay my kind benefactors, and also assist my poor brethren. Having continued in this place about ten weeks, we were again ordered to march; but, thank God, it was towards our own country, and the time of our deliverance was now come. Peace was proclaimed; and the French people around us hoisted the white cockade, and regarded us as friends.

Having arrived at St. Maloes, and slept there two nights, I obtained a passage to Jersey in a French vessel,

and the next day arrived safely at Poole. On our landing, we were most kindly welcomed by our countrymen; and the kind hospitality of the people of Poole can never be forgotten by us. Seeing our poverty, they immediately made a subscription to defray our coach-hire, and procure us necessaries, and pressed us to stay until the evening, that they might do more for us; but being anxious to take the first coach, we left those generous people, and on the 22nd of April, 1814, through the tender mercy of my God, I arrived safely at Portsmouth, having been three years and three months in French Prison.

Some account of Religious Societies in the British Navy; being the substance of a Speech delivered at the Fourth Anniversary of the Plymouth and Devonport Bethel Union,

BY MR. PARKER,

LATE OF HIS MAJESTY'S SHIP TONNANT.

IT was observed by one of the speakers, that "the salvation of one sailor, is of vast importance, on account of the influence of such a man's character among his shipmates." I felt the force of that observation, for I have been a witness of its truth; and by your permission, Sir, I will briefly relate to this meeting, what I have witnessed on board a man of war.

It will no doubt be recollected by many persons present, that early in the spring of 1803, the TONNANT, of 80 guns, was commissioned and manned in this port, under the command of Sir Edward Pellew. Her crew, when completed, consisted of 650 men:—I was one of that number. Among us there was one solitary individual, of religious character, whose name was *Hugh Roberts*:—he

now resides in the city of Bristol, and is greatly respected by all who know him. This man attrasted general attention as soon as he came on board, for he had no sooner gone below, than kneeling down between the guns on the main deck, he prayed in an audible manner for divine protection and assistance in his new ship, and for the blessing of God upon the whole of the officers and ship's crew. This strange act of devotion excited the utmost astonishment among the men, who surrounded him in crowds; some gazed in silent wonder, others laughed, some blasphemed, and others commended; whilst some slunk away as if unable to endure such a sight. From this time, Hugh Roberts was always ready to vindicate and recommend a religious life, to reprove hardened sinners, and exhort all to flee from the wrath to come. In this way he had full employment, for there was seldom an hour together without a crowd of men being collected around him, until the Master-at-arms interfered, and obtainedan or der to prevent the men from assembling in such numbers about the deck. But at the same time our Captain shewed his respect for Hugh Roberts, by ordering him to be exempted from all ordinary duties on the sabbath day.

For the space of two years he continued to exhort and instruct his shipmates privately, until he had the satisfaction to perceive that several had become very attentive, and manifested good desires. He then felt that it was his duty to form a religious society, and establish meetings for worship, both in public and private. He accordingly proposed to his few associates to meet together in the launch upon the booms, for the purpose of prayer and singing; which they did for several evenings; but some of the officers were offended at this proceeding, and complained to the Captain, who forbad their meeting in the boats in future.

Next evening, Hugh Roberts and his companions went between the guns on the main deck, hung up a lan-

tern, and in a public manner commenced the worship of God. The officers did not oppose this, and the practice was continued every evening (except when the ship's duty prevented) for seven or eight years, whilst the ship remained in commission.

Prayer, singing, reading, and expounding the scriptures, alternately occupied those sacred hours. Weather was never allowed to interrupt those meetings. Often have we knelt in salt water when the sea was washing over the decks; and often have we been obliged to hold fast with one hand, whilst we held our hymn book with the other, to keep ourselves from falling by the tossing and rolling of the ship. Whether at sea or in harbour, in British or Foreign ports—our meetings were regularly held; and when lying at *Corruna*, *Lisbon*, or *Cadiz*, we were often surrounded by crowds of Spaniards and Portuguese, who seemed to venerate our devotions, and wonder at such a scene in a British man of war.

The public labours of Hugh Roberts were soon crowned with success among his shipmates; God greatly owned the word of His servant, and the hearers felt the force of divine truth. Some who came out of curiosity, and others with a design to mock, were constrained to pray; and repeating their visits, became serious seekers of salvation. They renounced their sinful besetments, and became "new creatures." In a short time, some of the most wicked men on board, swearers, drunkards, lyars, and unclean persons, were transformed into meek, humble followers of Jesus Christ; a wonder to themselves, their officers, and shipmates; and in about two months the religious society amounted to about thirty souls.

These men were well acquainted with their duty as seamen, and none could be more ready or diligent; so that on this ground, neither their officers nor shipmates could ever reproach them. But on account of their reli-

gion they suffered cruel mockings continually. Whenever a man appeared to be religious, and had shewn his decision by joining the society, the intelligence soon spread to every berth, that Jack or Tom such-a-one had turned, and the person became the subject of general remark; nor could the Methodists, for some time, have any peace among their messmates, topmates, or watchmates; but among themselves they had both peace and joy in God; whilst they gloried in persecutions and reproaches for Christ's sake.

Besides the daily meetings for public worship, the members of society met together in the ship's fore chains for prayer and religious conversation; and in this way instructed and edified one another; and soon after the formation of this little church, the religion of the members was put to the test, by the battle of Trafalgar.

In expectation of a general engagement with the combined fleet of the enemy, the Methodists considered, that as their lot was providentially cast in a ship of war, it was their duty to fight in the cause of their country; and as they now professed to enjoy that religion which raises mortals above the fear of death, cowardice would not only be a crime in a martial point of view, but would also be reproachful to their religious profession: they therefore prayed unto God, to inspire them with fortitude, and give success to His Majesty's arms. On the evening preceding the action, they had a most solemn and interesting meeting, for the special purpose of communicating to each other the state of their souls. They spoke feelingly and faithfully of their christian experience, the evidence of their acceptance with God, and their hopes respecting that eternal world into which, in all probability, they were now on the point to launch.

It was solemnly and delightfully affecting to hear the answers that were made to the questions of our faithful leader,—such as, "Well, Jack, or Tom, or Bill, how is it

with your soul? what if a shot to-morrow should be the messenger of death to you? how are you affected with the thought of so soon appearing before God?"—One would reply, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." Another would say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and though I am killed and thrown overboard, and fish destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." A third would exclaim, in the language of the Poet,

"Fearless of hell and ghastly death,
I'll break through every foe,
The wings of love and arms of faith
Shall bear me conqueror through."

To our great comfort it was found, that most of the members were saved from the sting of death; and some were willing rather to depart and be with their Saviour. They spent the most of that night in devout conversation, in prayer, and praising the God of their salvation. About twelve o'clock next day the action began, and the Tonnant was engaged in the hottest of the battle, having a Spanish line of battle ship abreast, on the larboard side, and a large French 74 laid on board on the starboard quarter, both of which were taken by the Tonnant. In this action only one of the society was killed, and another wounded.

It was remarked of the member who was killed, that though actively employed in the performance of his duty, amidst the tremendous noise of the battle, he was heard serenely singing, "My Jesus hath done all things well," when a cannon shot struck him, and instantly removed him to another world. After the action, the officers of the Tonnant were pleased to make public and honorable mention, of the courage and activity which the Methodists displayed on this occasion.

Some time after this, another of the members died on board. Poor Joe was one of my messmates, and had

been ill for some time; but through all his affliction, and in the agonies of death, his Saviour's praise dwelt upon his lips, and some of his last words were,

> "I long to behold him array'd,
> With glory and light from above."

We buried him in Corruna; and though the superstitious Spaniards would allow him no place in consecrated ground, we prepared a grave in a bye place, and committed "Dust to dust, in certain hope of a glorious resurrection." Another of the members being ill, was sent to the Royal Hospital at Plymouth, where he finished his course with the joy and peace of a true christian. These were all that the society lost by death; but from the system of draughting the men from one ship to another, as is common in the navy, and by being detached on various services, the number on board the Tonnant was subject to variation; but this afforded an opportunity of diffusing the knowledge of Christ in other ships; whilst in the Tonnant others were brought into the way of truth, and filled up the places of those who had been removed; until, in 1812, the ship was put out of commission. The society was then dispersed into many ships, where they began a new career of usefulness, with various success; until at length the arrival of peace restored them to their country and their homes. Several of those men are now living in different parts of the kingdom, and prove, by their sincere and persevering attachment to the cause of Christ, that the religion which they experienced in a man of war, was no less than the power of God unto salvation.

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Thomas Pengelly